

ARTICLES

FAME, SAINTHOOD AND *IURODSTVO*: PATTERNS OF SELF-PRESENTATION IN TOLSTOI'S LIFE PRACTICE

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In the fifth and—as he himself described it—the most important point of his will of March 27, 1895, Leo Tolstoi wrote:

I request all my friends, near and far, not to praise me (I know that they will do it, because it is done even during my lifetime and in the least praiseworthy manner). If, however, people should wish to concern themselves with my writings, let them pay heed to those passages therein in which, I know, the power of God spoke through me, and let them draw profit therefrom for the concerns of their own lives. There have been moments when I felt myself the preacher of the will of God. Often I was so impure, so full of selfish passions, that the light of His truth was obscured by my darkness. But, at times, this truth passed through me, and these were the happiest moments of my life.¹

The mixture of modesty and aspiration demonstrated in these lines is characteristic of the man's artistic life. Tolstoi clearly claims for himself the role of a prophet, but then finds himself in a dilemma: how can such a prominent position be reconciled with the call for humility? How to combine the need to preach with his desire for monastic withdrawal?²

In his later years, Tolstoi repeatedly sought solutions to this problem. On November 9, 1891, he wrote in a letter: "I am afraid of fame among the people and ask myself constantly if I am not sinning by seeking fame, and try to judge myself strictly, and to act before God and for God" (*PSS* 66: 82). And he told his children Lev and Tatiana on March 12, 1894, that the "demon of vanity" had never left him, but that it had not brought him under its power (*PSS* 67: 77–78). Writing in his diary on May 15, 1895, Tolstoi devised a remarkable solution which satisfied his need both for fame and for obscurity.

1. Tolstoi 1930–72 (hereafter cited as *PSS*) 53:16. All translations are by the authors of the present article.

2. For a detailed discussion of how Tolstoi managed his own celebrity see Denner.

Having discussed various concepts, he came to the conclusion that the deliberate renunciation of fame leads to the highest fame of holiness:

One should not confound vanity with love of fame, much less with the longing for love—the love of love. The first is the inane desire to excel before others, sometimes even at bad things; the second is the desire to be praised for the useful and the good; the third is the desire to be loved. The first is to dance well; the second is to be held to be wise among men as well; the third is to see the expression of the people's love. The first is bad, the second better, whatever it may be, the third is legitimate. Holiness is to indulge none of these three things and to care only about the verdict of God. (*PSS* 53: 30–31)

Tolstoi played in his artistic imagination with differing, sometimes contradictory, roles of his self—presenting himself as a sinner, as a saint, and as the prophet of his own religion. His whole life after the spiritual crisis of 1877, however, clearly shows how he not only sought the status of “the Sage of Yasnaya Polyana,” but also enjoyed it (see Kolstø 2008). His tireless reception of advice-seekers, his wide-ranging correspondence with admirers, his public engagement with current affairs—Tolstoi saw all this as his purpose in life, above and beyond the writing of literary works. This ego-ideal is also reflected in the increasing number of holy hermits who appear as heroes in his late stories (“Father Sergei” [1890]; “The Posthumous Notes of Fyodor Kuzmich” [1905]; “Father Vassily” [1906]) (see Grodetskaia). William Nickell has noted many parallels between Tolstoi's fictional account of Fyodor Kuzmich and his own autobiographical prose.

Tolstoi groped for an acceptable form of holiness which would be consecrated, not by the Orthodox Church, but by a higher truth. His first biographer Pavel Biriukov told how in 1894 in addressing the staff of the Posrednik publishing house Tolstoi defined the proper balance between moral behavior and community engagement as a means to personal improvement. He warned equally of the “sin of stylitism” (asceticism for the sake of one's own salvation) and the “sin of socialism.” While Tolstoi shared the socialists' revulsion against social injustice, he rejected their attempts to change the social and political system through violent means. He also felt that the socialists erred by focusing on people's outer, material lives rather than on the inner, spiritual life. At the same time, he felt it equally wrong to ignore the suffering of others and to care only about the salvation of one's own soul. As noted by Biriukov (1921, 355) Tolstoi sketched this problem in the form of two diagrams:

Tolstoi aimed for the middle ground. Holiness meant for him not losing sight of either his own salvation or the spiritual destination of all mankind. Holiness without social impact seemed meaningless. The fundamental problem was: how to ensure the transmission of the sacred into society unless the holy person stages it himself? *How can both man and mankind be redeemed?*

Through his literary activity Tolstoi always aspired to the accumulation of what Pierre Bourdieu (74ff.) has called symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu, economic capital can be transformed into symbolic or social capital, and

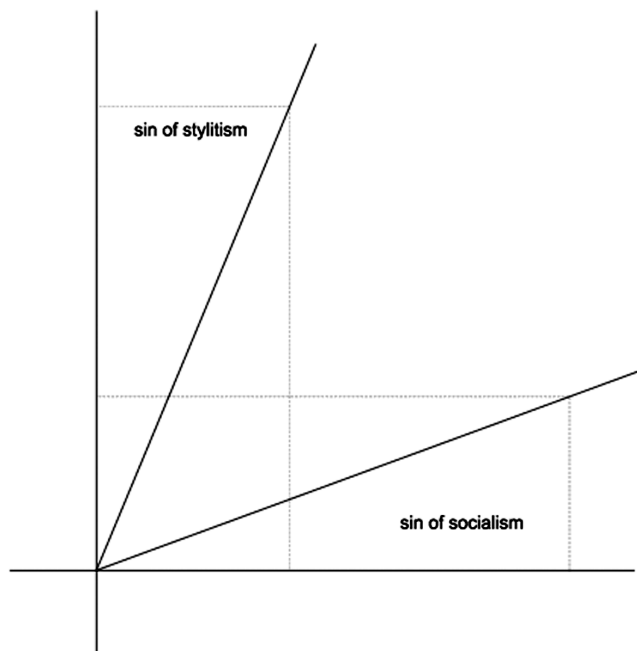


Fig. 1

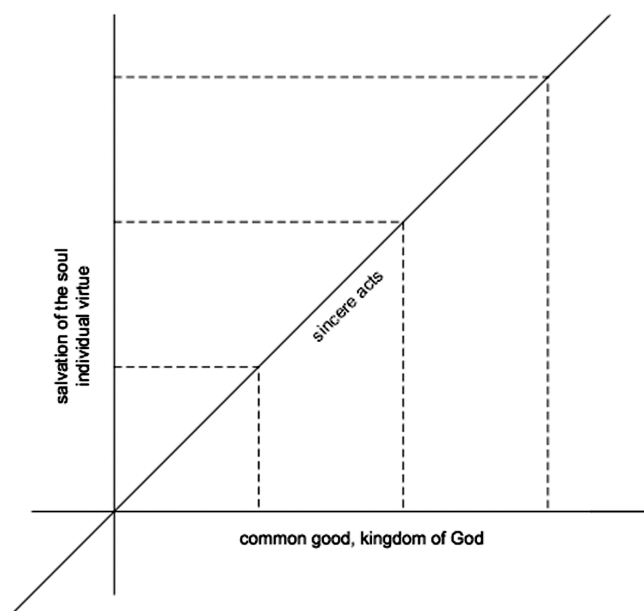


Fig. 2

vice versa. Each artist occupies a strong or weak position in the literary field, and this position correlates with a specific *habitus*—*habitus* meaning the way a person presents herself and acts in a social context. Tolstoi carefully reflected on his position as a writer and as a prophet in Russian society. After 1877, he sought to forgo any income from his works. In 1884 he founded the Posrednik publishing house, which mass-published his folk tales and religious tracts in cheap editions. In the first four years Posrednik produced about twelve million booklets. At first, these publications were distributed for free, and were later sold at a very low price (8 kopecks). Tolstoi took a radical outsider's position towards the literary field—after the publication of *Anna Karenina*, he ceased to compete with his rivals Dostoevsky, Turgenev, and Goncharov. He even declined an invitation to the Moscow Pushkin Festival of 1880 because his own ongoing work of translating and synthesizing the four Gospels seemed much more important to him.

This article examines one of the discursive strategies Tolstoi used to reconcile fame and sainthood. He pursued a paradoxical *habitus*: he wanted his life practice to be recognized by all, but without his remaining in the limelight. And while he was convinced that the only possible moral life must focus on working on one's own self-perfection, he also wanted to preach to others, and to criticize unjust and unchristian social structures.

A possible way out of these conundrums was *iurodstvo*, a specific phenomenon in Russian Orthodoxy known as “folly for the sake of Christ” or “Holy Foolishness.” Its biblical foundations are to be found primarily in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians: “let him become a fool, that he may be wise” (1 Cor 3:18).³ The word of the Cross is folly (“*iurodstvo*”) for those who are lost, who are perishing, but for the believer in Christ it is the power of God (1 Cor 1:18). This ideal for all Christians developed into a specific type of piety in Byzantine and Russian Orthodoxy.

The Russian pre-revolutionary encyclopedia of Brokgauz and Efron defines ‘*iurodstvo* in Christ’ as

one of the great achievements [*podvigov*] of Christian piety. The *iurodivye* not only voluntarily renounced all conveniences and goods of life on earth, all the benefits of life in society and relationship with their family and their close ones. No, they also took upon themselves the appearance of a fool who knows neither decency, nor feeling of shame, and therefore sometimes allows himself to commit corrupting acts. (Brokgauz & Efron 2: 421–22)

In this definition, the element of foolishness and irrationality is downplayed and the emphasis is placed on self-denial and asceticism.⁴ The *iurodivyi* took upon himself only the *appearance* of a fool. The same understand-

3. See also 1 Cor 1:25. The most comprehensive study of *iurodstvo* is the unpublished Ph.D. thesis by Christian Münch (2010); here we are drawing on pp. 29–41.

4. The word *podvig* should in this context be translated not as “an act of heroism,” which is the meaning it has acquired in modern Russian, but as “an act committed by a *podvizhnik*”—that is, an ascetic.

ing we find also in most modern presentations of *iurodstvo*. Thus, for instance, Timothy Ware (later Bishop Kallistos) has explained:

Folly for the sake of Christ is a form of sanctity found in Byzantium, but particularly prominent in medieval Russia: the “Fool” carries the ideal of self-stripping and humiliation to its furthest extent, by renouncing all intellectual gifts, all forms of earthly wisdom and by voluntarily taking upon himself the Cross of madness. (118)

The *iurodivyi* can be described as a “fool” only in inverted commas. He (occasionally she) has taken on the appearance of madness or insanity by a deliberate act of sacrifice and asceticism. Since fools were scorned by people around them, their asceticism, even if extremely arduous, could hardly lead to vanity. At this point, however, the sources are somewhat ambiguous. A person who was recognized as a genuine *iurodivyi* seems often not only to have been respected, but might even serve as a voice of moral authority in society. As Ware notes, these fools often performed a valuable social role: “simply because they were fools, they could criticize those in power with a frankness which no one else dared to employ” (118).

Although the Russian Church authorities of the Middle Ages actively combated the *iurodstvo* phenomenon, they eventually had to relent. Between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries no fewer than 36 *iurodivye* were canonized (Bolshakoff 49). However, the Church continued to insist that appearances could be deceptive: many who looked and behaved like *iurodivye* were actually impostors, *lzhe-iurodivye*. Since the “genuine” *iurodivye* also broke with social convention, it was extremely difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff. However, according to Brokgauz and Efron, one identifying characteristic was that the pretenders “screamed, sang and committed various boisterous acts simply out of an egotistical desire to attract the attention of the faithful” (Brokgauz & Efron, entry “Iurodivye,” emphasis added).

In several texts and diary notes Tolstoi referred to and sometimes discussed at length the phenomenon of *iurodstvo*, usually with sympathy and deep respect. In 1905, Tolstoi made some notes on several stories he wished to write—and one of these was to be about “the joy of *iurodstvo*” (PSS 55: 301). In 1908 and 1909 he returned to the *iurodstvo* ideal, calling it “a great thing” (PSS 56: 97; 57: 94). In 1899 he had noted that “involuntary *iurodstvo* is the best school of goodness” (PSS 53: 218). On March 22, 1905, he wrote that, in order to lead a good life, it is necessary “to love all human beings, without considering whether this love will be returned, even to practice *iurodstvo* (unnoticed)...” (PSS 55: 130). With the qualifiers “involuntary” and “unnoticed” in these quotations seem to be attempts to dissociate himself from the fake, ostentatious *iurodivyi*.

If insanity or irrationalism were the defining features of *iurodstvo*, these sympathetic assessments would not be what we might expect to find in the di-

aries of the author of *Soedinenie i perevod chetyrekh evangelii* [*Harmony and Translation of the Gospels*, 1881] and *V chem moia vera* [*What I believe*, 1884], where Tolstoi emphasized a rationalistic interpretation of the Christian faith. The most prominent case in point concerns Tolstoi's notes in his personal copy of the Bible. He rejected the traditional translation of the first verse of the Gospel according to St. John: "In the beginning was the Word." He replaced "Word" with "Understanding" or even with "Understanding of life [*razumenie zhizhni*]" (Tolstoi 1995,19). The rendering of the godly "Logos" as "Understanding" points to the core of Tolstoi's theology: The "Logos" is already present in Man, and thus proves his potential godliness.

However, antirationalism was not the central element of *iurodstvo*. In the Orthodox understanding, asceticism, in the form of struggle against the passions and a striving for moral perfection, is a far more important aspect of *iurodstvo* piety (see Murav 21 *passim*). This is also in line with Tolstoi's understanding of *iurodstvo*. However, the asceticism of self-perfection, if cultivated in isolation, would in Tolstoi's view lead to "the sin of stylitism." That made it important for him to find a model of sainthood that could combine asceticism with work in the world, to promote the Kingdom of God. In classical Orthodox teaching, *iurodstvo* was a form of holiness that could be practiced only "in the world" [*v miru*]. Thus, *iurodstvo*, better than most other religious models available to Tolstoi, seemed to manage the precarious balancing act between quietism and activism, avoiding the extremes of both stylitism and socialism. Stylitism would amount to egoism, and socialism was too materialistic a way of salvation. The *iurodivye* preached their moral and social message in an obscure and symbolic way, through actions and not direct proclamations.

Tolstoi's interest in *iurodstvo* may thus be interpreted as an attempt to unite two ideological stances. Justin Weir has argued that Tolstoi constantly "inscribed absence into his authorship," and calls this strategy Tolstoi's "narrative alibi" (9). In this sense, *iurodstvo* becomes just another narrative alibi in Tolstoi's life project—it allowed for pious humility and fame simultaneously.

Western scholarship on Tolstoi and his religious teachings has paid little attention to his fascination with *iurodstvo*—this holds true for Weir as well. Typical in this respect is G. W. Spence, who does not comment upon it at all, even though he explicitly defines Tolstoi's religious philosophy as "ascetic" (Spence 1967).⁵

In one of the few studies that discuss Tolstoi's interest in *iurodstvo*, Per-Arne Bodin (37, 45ff.) points out Tolstoi's heavily ambiguous attitude toward this form of piety. However, Bodin exaggerates the element of irrationality in the holy fool tradition and sees this as a contrast to Tolstoi's rationalism.

5. Spence 1967. This can partly be explained by Spence's deliberate decision to focus only on Tolstoi's published works and ignore his private reflections in diaries and elsewhere. It is in such private settings that Tolstoi's fascination with *iurodstvo* comes across most clearly.

Daniel Rancour-Laferrière has developed a psychoanalytic reading of Tolstoi's teaching. He regards Tolstoi's yearning for *iurodstvo* as an expression of his "masochistic needs," similar to the Shiite Muslim who engages in public self-flagellation, or the affluent American psychotherapeutic patient who always manages to find himself or herself in humiliating situations (96–98). This interpretation is not very helpful: Rancour-Laferrière is explicitly attempting to translate the culturally circumscribed phenomenon of *iurodstvo*, which arose in a specifically Orthodox context, into a cross-culturally applicable concept.

Christian Münch (347–67) stresses the "involuntary character" in Tolstoi's treatment of *iurodstvo*. According to Münch, *iurodstvo* for Tolstoi meant a spiritual exercise in resigning fame and overcoming pride. Münch calls Tolstoi the "philosopher of *iurodstvo*" and highlights *iurodstvo* as a model for Tolstoi's life practice.

Martin Tamcke includes a chapter on *iurodstvo* in his "spiritual biography" of Tolstoi, pointing to the portrayal of Grisha in the novel "Childhood" and highlighting the importance of the ideal of *iurodstvo* for Tolstoi himself (55–60). Unfortunately he does not delve into how *iurodstvo* fits into Tolstoi's religious views and life practice.

***Iurodstvo* as a model for Tolstoi's authorial habitus**

Some of Tolstoi's biographers have made references to *iurodstvo* as a possible framework for understanding the man's actions and personality. In A. N. Wilson's account Tolstoi comes across more as a fake *iurodivyi* than a real one: "There was Lyovochka the village idiot or *iurodivyi*, muttering his holy thoughts, mowing (very badly) in the fields or attracting the derision of simpletons or sophisticates alike by his hamfisted attempts to make his own boots" (305). Less flippantly, Rosamund Bartlett claims that *iurodstvo* was "a peculiarly Russian form of sainthood to which Tolstoi aspired," and "a fundamental medium for the communication of his message" (332–33). How far can this perspective take us in understanding Tolstoi's habitus as an author?

Tolstoi left behind no detailed presentation of his views on *iurodstvo*, and in none of his published works did he draw any clear lines from *iurodstvo* to his own person. While there are some more or less oblique allusions to this form of Orthodox spirituality in his published works, most references to it appear in private contexts like conversations, diaries, and letters. These mentions clearly show that Tolstoi remained preoccupied with the *iurodstvo* tradition throughout his life. On the whole, he saw it in a positive light and was fascinated by various different aspects of this phenomenon: love for one's enemies, renunciation of the world, the ability to withstand the disgust and rejection of others, and a dispassionate attitude toward worldly goods and the opinions of others.

Before Tolstoi's "conversion" in the late 1870s only a few references to

iurodstvo can be found in his diaries.⁶ It is not until his religious period that such references become frequent. On December 4, 1888, he wrote: “On the way, I thought: [We ought to] accustom ourselves to and even desire to be reviled and insulted by those whom we encounter (in order to test ourselves and to destroy our hateful individuality) (*iurodstvo*)” (*PSS* 50: 9). Once again, the focus is on the ideal of humility and on being able to endure scorn. In addition, in 1890 he wrote several diary notes that concerned *iurodstvo*. For example, on August 13:

It is evident that *iurodstvo* is an unnatural ideal: Remaining calm and unaffected [*ravnodushie*] whether one is met with praise or with condemnation. But in our world we (or I at least) have become so accustomed to living solely for the sake of vanity—to achieve fame among people—that it becomes necessary to accustom oneself deliberately to tolerating the condemnation of others, in order to improve. From the one extreme we need to pass over to the other extreme. (*PSS* 51: 75)

Here, *iurodstvo* appears, paradoxically enough, as both a necessary ideal to be emulated and an unnatural exaggeration. Tolstoi is never in doubt that this is strong medicine indeed, and with possible undesirable side effects such as tickling our pride and vanity. In the end, he decides not to prescribe it for himself, because he feels he is too weak in spirit:

In my prayers today I was thinking about the temptations of human fame, and how we should rejoice when others revile us. I thought of *iurodstvo*, and of how I myself might make use of that way. And I felt how dangerous *iurodstvo* is for someone as weak as I.

If one distances oneself completely from the opinions of others, and even begins to seek rejection and blame, that means losing the moderating force of public opinion. A weak person still needs this moderating influence. That, I believe, is the Achilles’ heel of *iurodstvo*. (*PSS* 51: 113)

Like the Russian Church, Tolstoi distinguished between a genuine, God-pleasing *iurodstvo* and a superficial, ineffectual variety. The difference, he explained, was between “open and secret *iurodivyi*” (*PSS* 55: 350). By the former he understood “the recognized, professional *iurodivyi*,” whereas the latter “is unknown to us all.” He added, “Only the second is pleasing to God” (*PSS* 55: 213). In Tolstoi’s view, the true *iurodivyi* operates unbeknownst to others. *Iurodstvo* is internalized, becoming an attitude toward life that is available to everyone. In that way, it could still be possible for Tolstoi himself, who lacked all the external attributes of *iurodstvo*, to relate to this type of piety.

We also find references to *iurodstvo* in Tolstoi’s published works. In his autobiographical debut work *Childhood* [*Detstvo*, 1852] Tolstoi describes how the main character, Irteniev, together with a friend, secretly witnesses the ascetic practices and ecstatic prayers of the holy fool Grisha. Grisha, Tolstoi explains, is a fictive character, based on his impressions from many different *iurodivye* (*PSS* 34: 395). He is, in a way, an incarnation of the very concept

6. See entries in 1863, *PSS* 53: 16; in 1873, *PSS* 48: 99; and 1877, *PSS* 62: 347.

of *iurodstvo* as understood by Tolstoi. Pavel Biriukov sees Tolstoi's early encounters with *stranniki* and *iurodivye* as among the most significant experiences of his formative years, and as an important source for understanding the religious focus of his later years.⁷

In Tolstoi's highly autobiographical but unfinished drama, *The Light Shines in the Darkness* [*I svet vo tme svetit*, 1900], the main character, estate owner Nikolai Ivanovich Saryntsev, is disgusted with his aristocratic upper-class life, and threatens to leave home and family and take to the open road. After a tempestuous scene with his wife, however, he promises to stay. In desperation, he later prays to God: "You wished that I should be despised, that everyone should point at me and say: he does not practice what he preaches. So let it be. You yourself know best what you need, Lord. Humility, *iurodstvo*. Oh, if only I could aspire to that!" (PSS 31: 181). In his collection of devotional writings, *A Circle of Readings*, Tolstoi expressed a similar understanding of *iurodstvo*: "That which is called *iurodstvo*, a behavior that provokes condemnation and attack from other people, cannot be defended insofar as it elicits bad actions from others, but it is understandable and desirable as the sole possible test of one's love of God and of one's neighbors" (PSS 41: 331). It is not immediately clear from this quotation which "bad actions" Tolstoi feared that *iurodstvo* could bring forth in others. According to Tolstoi's longtime companion Vladimir Chertkov, in the aforementioned passage Tolstoi was referring to himself (27). Even after he had begun to preach the ideal of an existence free of possessions and the necessity of a simple, Spartan lifestyle, Tolstoi himself continued to live on his estate at Yasnaya Polyana, surrounded by servants and luxury. This lack of correspondence between ideal and practice was condemned by many of his opponents and even by some of his adherents. It is this condemnation that, Chertkov says, Tolstoi is comparing with the condemnation of *iurodivye* (ibid.; see also Sukhotina-Tolstaia 395–96). This comparison is surprising: while the *iurodivye* were scorned by their fellow men because they broke with the accepted social conventions, Tolstoi was derided for the exact opposite reason: he *failed to break* with the aristocratic life style as his teaching would have required.

Tolstoi as a secret adherent of the ideals of Christian Orthodox ethics

Tolstoi is mainly known for his clashes with the Russian Orthodox Church. However, we must not overlook the fact that he oriented both his religious views and his daily living habits around Orthodox tradition (see e.g. Gustafson 1986; Kolstø 1991, 148–66; Kolstø 2010). Many of his views are

7. Biriukov 1905–23, 2: 287–90; see also Kolstø 2008. Tolstoi had become acquainted with *iurodstvo* also through his reading of *The Life of the Saints* [*Kniga zhitiia sviatykh*]. His copy of this book contained a version of the holy fool Andrei's *Vita* in which he made notes on eight out of thirteen pages, sometimes underlining the entire page. See V. Bulgakov vols. 1a, 1b, and 2; 1a: 366.

consistent with the key texts of Orthodox theology. This is particularly true of his ideas on asceticism.

Tolstoi's idea of virtue is clearly ascetic, even if he rejects the concept of "asceticism." In his understanding, this word implies self-inflicted pain, and Christ did not teach us that we should torment ourselves. Instead, we should *realize* ourselves, Tolstoi explains (*PSS* 23: 415). If, however, *asceticism* is defined as the cleansing of all desires, needs, and longings, then Tolstoi's ethics clearly fit the bill. He teaches that "virtue consists in the suppression of passions through self-denial [...] This is the eternal law, the highest law" (*PSS* 35, 184). Those who seek to satisfy their passions always end up inflicting pain, not only on themselves, but on others as well. A carnal, animal life is therefore not only painful but also sinful. Man always recognizes pain as a consequence of sin (*PSS* 26: 425, 430).

My bodily life is subject to suffering and death, and no effort of mine can rid myself of it. My spiritual life, however, is subject to neither suffering nor death. Therefore, I may be saved from suffering and death in one way only: by transferring my consciousness to my spiritual "I". (*PSS* 41,503)

The ultimate goal of Tolstoian asceticism is *passionlessness*—the complete eradication of bodily desires and cravings. Those who manage to transfer their entire meaning of life to the spiritual sphere have rid themselves not only of all pain but also of all pleasure. The true Christian has achieved an imperturbable tranquility, desiring nothing and fearing nothing (*PSS* 39: 189; see also 42: 167, 342).

Passionlessness, however, is only one pillar of Tolstoi's ethical doctrine: the other is love. As Tolstoi sees it, there is no contradiction here, since love in his understanding is manifested in action and not in feeling. This double aim of the virtuous life—to suppress the passions and to enhance love in the world—permeates several of Tolstoi's didactic tracts and fictional works from the later period. Even if Pozdnyshev in *The Kreutzer Sonata* is not necessarily the author's *alter ego*, in the following passage he expresses a view that Tolstoi sympathized strongly with:

If the aim of humanity, as it is written in the books of the Prophets, is that all people shall be united in love, that they shall strike their swords into scibles, and so on, what is it keeps us from reaching this goal? It is the passions (*strasti*) [...] If the passions were obliterated (*unichtozhat-sia*) [...] the prophecy would be fulfilled. (*PSS* 27, 30)

Tolstoi took many of his moral ideas from the Orthodox monastic doctrine, in particular the ideal of passionlessness. But Christian monasticism was not his only source of inspiration: he found this ideal also in Buddhism and Stoicism. These three currents of thought seem to have pulled him in the same direction. Even so, he appears to have kept a greater critical distance from the *apatheia* idea as formulated in Buddhism and Stoicism. Tolstoi wrote in his diary on September 22, 1900, that Christianity teaches the same as the Bud-

dhists and Stoics: they all demand that we shall renounce ourselves and let our will flow together with the will of God. Even so, there is a crucial difference, he claims. The Christian doctrine does not insist that we shall destroy our desires [*unichtozhat' zhelaniĭ*], but that we direct them in a constructive direction—towards the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, that is, “to replace fights and violence with love and harmony” (*PSS* 54: 43–44). Even if this excerpt is only one of many attempts Tolstoi made at reconciling some seeming inconsistencies in his teaching, it nevertheless suggests that he regarded Buddhist and Stoic ethics as more extreme and more life-denying than what he defined as “true Christianity.”

A particularly important source of inspiration for Tolstoi's ascetic ideal was the famous collection of ancient and medieval monastic texts that in the eighteenth century were translated into Church Slavonic under the title *Dobrotoliubie* (Bolshakoff 90; Ware 110). Tolstoi had a copy of the *Dobrotoliubie* from 1851 that contains a number of his underlinings and comments in the margins. We do not know when Tolstoi acquired the book, but it is documented that he read it in 1886 and 1887 and again in 1898 (V. Bulgakov 265–66).

One of the *Dobrotoliubie* authors, Gregory the Sinaite, developed a detailed teaching on the passions. He explains that passions deprive men of access to grace. A soul that loves sin and the passions becomes an abode of demons, in this world and in the next. Passionate habits, therefore, are the torture of hell. They are stinking serpents, snakes, and toads that torment the soul.⁸ In less metaphorical language, Gregory claims that “when the passions are in action, some harmful thoughts [*pomysli*] take the lead and others follow. The daydreams walk up front; behind them the passions come. The passions are ahead of the demons, and the demons follow the passions.”⁹ In July 1898, Tolstoi wrote the following in his diary: “*Pomysli* lead to daydreams, daydreams to passions, and passions to demons (from the *Dobrotoliubie*)” (*PSS* 53: 204). There can be no doubt that in this passage he is referring to the aforementioned text by Gregory the Sinaite.

Following Evagrius's famous classification of cardinal sins, Gregory holds that there are eight dominant passions: gluttony, avarice, vanity, lust, wrath, anxiety, despondency, and pride. Of these, the three first, he explains, are primary, while the latter five are secondary.¹⁰ In his copy of the *Dobrotoliubie*, Tolstoi underlined all of them, and his own works contain similar indexes of vices (as in *Confessions*, *PSS* 23: 4). Somewhat later in his text, Gregory singles out adultery and despondency as being “particularly cruel and oppressive.”¹¹ In the margins of his copy of the *Dobrotoliubie*, Tolstoi jotted down the words “the very worst” (V. Bulgakov 1a: 265).

8. *Dobrotoliubie* 1851, 1: part 1, leaf 89, on the front side; 1: part 1, leaf 92, on the front side.

9. 1851, 1: part 1, leaf 95, both sides of the leaf.

10. 1851, 1: part 1, leaf 98, on the reverse side.

11. 1851, 1: part 1, leaf 102, on the reverse side.

The Eastern Christian monks taught that the struggle against the passions is completed only when the monk has achieved *apatheia*—in Church Slavonic, *bezstrastie*. Several of the *Dobrotoliubie* authors describe *apatheia* as a divine condition and claim that “Bezstrastie is the resurrection of the soul before the resurrection of the body, as far as this is possible for man. It is to put on the image and likeness of God.”¹² When God gives a man the grace of being as if he were dead toward the passions and toward sin, God makes him partake in divine life.¹³ God himself is unchangeable and passionless. That is why we should strive to rid ourselves of the passions: to become as much as possible like God himself.¹⁴ The passions are ties that bind us to this world. Only when these moorings are cut is the soul free to ascend to God.

Similarly to what Tolstoi taught, the monks of the Eastern Christian tradition did not see the state of *apatheia* as some kind of nirvana or extinction of life, but as another word for “love.” Callistus and Ignatius claim that love, *apatheia*, and sonship are the same: they are united as are light, and warmth, and flame in a fire.¹⁵ And Abba Philemon describes a spiritual chain reaction thus: “Silence begets asceticism, asceticism—crying; crying—fear; fear—humility; humility—consideration; consideration—love, and love makes the soul healthy and apathetic.”¹⁶ Here *apatheia* is the end-state of mind which follows immediately after love.

Occasionally, Tolstoi himself achieved a state of *apatheia*. In 1909 he noted in his diary, “Today for the first time I experienced an entirely new sensation: Complete submission to God, complete passionlessness [*ravnodushie*] towards everything that will happen to me, an absence of all desire except this: to do as He wishes” (*PSS* 57: 81). His claim that this was “the first time” should be taken with a pinch of salt, however, as he had on other occasions written in his diary about similar experiences (see e.g. *PSS* 52: 80 and 55: 262). It was not least in his yearning for this state of mind that Tolstoi extolled the virtues of *iurodstvo*. At the same time, he sought in this model of holiness a means to avoid the self-seclusion of the stylite.

***Iurodstvo* as a middle course between stylitism and socialism**

In *Father Sergii* [*Otets Sergii*], Tolstoi’s understanding of *iurodstvo* as an expression of *apatheia* comes through very clearly. At the same time, *iurodstvo* was a kind of self-perfection that brought its practitioner in close contact with the common, lowly people. Sergii, alias Kasatskii, achieved the supreme virtue of passionlessness when he left the secluded life—first as a stern and esteemed monk in a monastery, then as a famed *starets* in a hermit’s

12. 1902, 1: part 2, leaf 120, on the front side.

13. 1902, 1: part 2, leaf 47, on the front side.

14. 1851, 1: part 1, leaf 16, on both sides of the leaf.

15. 1902, 1: part 2, leaf 113, on the reverse side

16. 1902, part IV, leaf 144, on the front side.

hut—in order to join the *stranniki* on the road. As Bodin rightly remarks, “Father Sergius in his role as a wandering monk has many traits in common with the figure of the fool in Christ” (39). Erik Martin points to the paradoxical unity of self-perfection and self-annihilation in “Father Sergii” (Martin 91–96). In the short story itself, no direct reference is made to the *iurodstvo* tradition, but the overtones are there—indicated, for example, by Kasatskii’s holy ideal, Pashenka, being depicted as simpleminded, even “stupid.” She shows him that there is no contradiction between service to God and service to mankind: only by living for humanity is it possible to live for God.

With Pashenka as his ideal, Kasatskii takes to the road with other *stranniki*—to search for God. With words and deeds he helps those whom he meets, but because he now finds himself at the very bottom of the social ladder, there is no longer any danger that people will praise or honor him. We do not learn much about Kasatskii’s life on the open road. One episode, however, stands as an expression of the change that has taken place within him: One day he is stopped by a group of travelers. An estate owner and his family are showing some visiting Frenchmen what Russian rural life is like, and Kasatskii is stared at and cross-examined like a choice ethnographic specimen (see Kolstø 2010, 127).

Kasatskii was particularly glad for this encounter, because he had no interest in what other people thought. For him, it was the easiest thing in the world to receive the 20 kopeks [which he was given] and hand them over to his companion, the blind beggar. The less the opinions of others meant for him, the more keenly did he feel God. (PSS 31: 46)

There can be no doubt that Tolstoj’s intention here was to describe *apatheia* in practice. On June 10, 1891, he wrote in his diary:

On Father Sergii: He learned what it meant to rely on God only after he had lost every shred of respect among his fellow men. Only then did he learn resolve and fullness of life. He achieved complete indifference [*ravnodushie*] toward other people and their actions. (PSS 52: 39)

While working on *Father Sergii*, Tolstoj made the following note in his diary:

I have often thought and written that *iurodstvo* in Christ—that is, deliberately presenting oneself as worse than one is—is the supreme characteristic of virtue. Now I realize that it is not only the supreme characteristic, but indeed the necessary primary (or, more correctly, secondary) one for every good life. As soon as a man succeeds in liberating himself to some extent from the sins of the flesh, he strays from the true path and falls into an even deeper abyss—that of being praised by others [...] This is a theme that I must develop further. It is worth it. (PSS 52: 81–82)

In her preface to the 31st volume of the *Jubilee Edition* of Tolstoj’s collected works, A. Ozereva wrote that *Father Sergii* reveals one of Tolstoj’s most dangerous tendencies, which is “the glorification of *iurodstvo*, this reactionary preaching of meekness and humility” (PSS 31: ix). The Soviet researcher, however, failed to see that even as *iurodstvo* teaches moral self-perfection and humility, it can be, and often has been, a vehicle of social protest. This was

strongly emphasized in a treatise on this type of saintliness that was published in St. Petersburg in 1913, only a few years after Tolstoi's death: *Iurodstvo i stolpnichestvo: Religiozno-psikhologicheskoe issledovanie*, by the priest-monk Aleksii (Kuznetsov, 1875–1938), who later became bishop of Viatka. Aleksii examined two classical forms of Orthodox ascetic piety. As we have noted, Tolstoi denounced stylitism but embraced the other form, *iurodstvo*. Aleksii, for his part, found highly praiseworthy elements in both *iurodstvo* and stylitism, but also differences between the two.

Aleksii explains that *iurodstvo*, like stylitism, is a kind of asceticism. The holy fools train themselves to withstand all kinds of pain. They practice the standard ascetic exercises of monasticism by denying themselves food, sleep, clothing, and shelter. They do not possess anything of value, and in that way they escape attachment to this world.

In addition to their physical deprivations, the *iurodivye* suffer severe spiritual pains in the scorn and humiliation that they must endure from other people. An import aspect of *iurodstvo* is its concealment, or *skrytnost'* (Aleksii, 102–3). The virtues of the holy fools are hidden from others, who see only their apparent indecency and insanity, and despise them. At this point, Aleksii's teaching comes very close to Tolstoi's notion of secret *iurodstvo*. For both, concealment was a means to avoid the vanity and pride which *iurodstvo* could lead to.

The aim of *iurodstvo*, Aleksii explains, is moral perfection: "Through their lives the holy *iurodivye* eloquently preached precisely this: in an unsightly, simple life in this world it is possible to keep the mind pure and achieve the perfection which every person is required to strive after" (217). The perfection of the *iurodivyi* has two aspects—one external, directed against other people, and one internal, directed against ourselves. In its outward relations, this, as with Tolstoi, is expressed through *love*. The *iurodivyi* loves his fellow men and wants them to attain the same degree of perfection as he does. In order to become a model for others, he must work incessantly on his self-perfection. His life is a constant fight against carnal, as well as spiritual, passions and temptations. The aim of this fight is *apatheia*, which is the highest expression of true *iurodstvo*.

The strong emphasis on *apatheia* in both the Orthodox *iurodstvo* tradition and in Tolstoi's teaching could easily lead to quietism and social passivity. This is, however, not the case. Tolstoi's famous call not to resist evil by force has often been misunderstood—his most fervent critic was Vladimir Solovyov (1903), who accused Tolstoi of just letting the Antichrist take action. Of course Tolstoi was a radical pacifist, far from a quietist. He actively and articulately fought against what he regarded as the evil ways of the powers-that-be: warfare, corporal punishment, the death penalty, and so on. While he denounced politics and did not want to have anything to do with the revolutionary movement, the tsarist establishment nevertheless regarded him,

with good reason, as a dangerous, subversive opponent. The two ideals of “apathy” and “sympathy”—to rid oneself of all emotions, on the one hand, and to experience the emotions of others as if they were one’s own, on the other—coexisted somewhat uneasily in Tolstoi’s teaching.

A similar tension between quietism and activism can be found also in Eastern Orthodox *iurodstvo*. As underscored by the priest-monk Aleksii, the ministry of the *iurodivyi* includes *oblichenie*—the unmasking of evil—and calls for *pokaianie*—repentance. “Iurodstvo is a protest against the discrepancy between the teaching of the Gospel and the life of society” (187–88). The *iurodivyi* censures human injustice, such as abuse of property, arbitrary power, and social arrogance, wherever it is found, “even among the mighty of this world” (*ibid.*). The holy fools castigated the ungodly in authoritative and fearless tones, calling down the wrath of heaven upon those who failed to repent.

In another classical exposé of *iurodstvo* the Orthodox writer Ioann Kovalevsky (1895) made the same point. He claimed that *iurodstvo* can only be practiced in society [*v miru*] because it is the goal of the holy fool to serve humanity. Whereas the Christian hermits focus on their own personal salvation, *iurodivye* seek to redeem their fellow men. Kovalevsky remarked that the very way in which the *iurodivye* lived served as an indirect general criticism of the institutions and conventions of society. It was as if they were “strangers” from another world, neither knowing nor needing to know how to follow the accepted norms (Kovalevskii 4). In this way, their very lifestyle sowed doubts about the validity of such norms. This interpretation of the social criticism implicit in *iurodstvo* is remarkably similar to Viktor Shklovsky’s famous description of Tolstoi’s literary style as *ostranenie* (alienation or *Entfremdung*) (1967, 14). By giving a “superficial” description of institutions that a society has invested with deep symbolic significance, Tolstoi indirectly but very effectively deprived them of any inner meaning.

After Tolstoi’s death in 1910, Professor Vasily Ekzempliarsky at the Kiev Theological Seminary discussed Tolstoi’s teaching in relation to *iurodstvo* and social justice. In a notable article Ekzempliarsky, an expert on early Christian social thought, compared the social message of Tolstoi and the teachings of one of the most famous of the early church fathers, the fourth-century Greek Bishop John Chrysostom. In sermon after sermon, Chrysostom had lashed out against the lifestyle of the upper classes in Constantinople. He not only reviled the luxury and debauchery of the well-to-do but also attacked the very principle of property rights.¹⁷ Chrysostom’s words were so harsh that in the end he was deposed as patriarch and chased away from the imperial city; however, he was later canonized and became one of the most popular saints of the Eastern Church.

17. Chrysostom 1915. Henry Chadwick characterizes Chrysostom’s social teaching as “socialist” (Chadwick 188)

Most Orthodox theologians in late tsarist Russia did their best to dilute Chrysostom's social message and combat its potentially subversive effects, with one exception—Vasily Ekzempliarsky. Ekzempliarsky presented Chrysostom as a forerunner of Tolstoi, and Tolstoi as the most consistent follower of the Greek saint (Ekzempliarskii 1978/1912). "Since the times of Saint John Chrysostom none of our moral theologians has answered the question of the significance of the teaching of the Gospel for the life of men in such a lucid, determined, and direct way as the late L. N. Tolstoi," Ekzempliarsky maintained (1912, 10).

To both Chrysostom and Tolstoi, the Sermon on the Mount contained the very essence of Jesus' message, which they both interpreted in a strictly literal sense, Ekzempliarsky pointed out. When Jesus admonishes us to turn the other cheek or to give our cloak to those who will sue us for our coat, this should be understood not in a metaphorical, but rather in a most direct sense. This is a tall order indeed, Ekzempliarsky admitted, but in order to live a life as a Christian, it is necessary "to accept that the message of the Gospel is life-sustaining in the true meaning of the word [...] and] is in effect to destroy the foundations of contemporary cultural life and to propagate *iurodstvo*" (Ekzempliarskii 1978/1912; see also Ekzempliarskii 1916). Thus, Ekzempliarsky indirectly hailed both John Chrysostom and Tolstoi as spiritual *iurodivye*—and ultimately elevated also the latter to the status of a saint. Ekzempliarsky's social doctrine, however, was controversial. His comparisons between the Greek saint and "the heretical teacher at Iasnaia Poliana" created uproar, and he was forced to resign from his position at the Kiev Theological Seminary (Ekzempliarskii 1912; see also S. Bulgakov).

Tolstoi's apparent and hidden habitus as *iurodivyi* and saint

The main dilemma for Tolstoi in his later years lay in the inner conflict between fame and self-abasement. As an author, he removed himself from the literary field. The destruction of his own strong position in this field was correlated with his ambition to hold an eminent position in the societal field. Tolstoi would not be satisfied with pure literature: he wanted to change the lives of his readers. He sought an equally paradoxical solution to this double-bind situation. Most of the time he had only words of contempt and ridicule for the Russian Orthodox Church—and yet he employed a concept of sanctity from the Russian Orthodox tradition: the holy fool.

Tolstoi's *iurodstvo* is a habitus in Bourdieu's sense. Tolstoi could not appear openly as a saint and therefore chose the pattern of the secret *iurodivyi*. He made few explicit attempts to reconcile the ideal of *apatheia* and the ministry to the world found in *iurodstvo*. His interpretation of *iurodstvo* was basically focused on the ability to withstand the contempt and derision of others, and to quell all passions—to achieve the ideal of *apatheia*. At the same time, he remained wary of all aspects of *iurodstvo* that could be seen as exhi-

bitionism. He sought to retain the inner and hidden qualities of this form of piety, and set up an ideal of the *incognito iurodivyi*. However, while *iurodstvo* was one of the models that Tolstoi tried out in order to find a balance between inner, personal holiness and teaching to the world, between stylitism and socialism, this endeavour eventually failed. The tension was never resolved—not in his teaching, and not in his personal life.

For the *iurodivyi*, the medium was eminently the message: he “preached” only orally or through wordless action. This method Tolstoi was never able to adopt. The “ascetism” of abstaining from the written word was impossible for the inveterate writer. While Tolstoi wrote one novel, *Resurrection*, and some short stories after his conversion, in his later period he increasingly discarded fiction and focused on issuing pamphlets and other explicitly didactic texts. Towards the end of his life he left this genre as well, and instead compiled anthologies of texts written by others—but he still formulated his message in *writing*. Ultimately, then, for Lev Tolstoi, the unresolved tension between teaching through the word and teaching through action was the root cause of his failure to adopt *iurodstvo* as a model for his own mission and his holiness.

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Реферат

Пол Колстё и Ульрих Шмид

Слава, святость и юродство: Модели саморепрезентации в жизненной практике Льва Толстого

Толстой разрывался между желанием вкусить, с одной стороны, мирской славы, с другой — Духа Святого. Он работал над собой в стремлении к совершенству и одновременно пытался как можно шире распространять

свои религиозные взгляды. Для достижения этой противоречивой цели он выбрал для себя позу юродивого, тем самым исподволь утверждая тот мистический идеал Русской православной церкви, против которого он обративших внимание на исторические корни толстовской позы, был Василий Экземплярский (1875–1933). Русская православная церковь, однако, не признавала подобную точку зрения, и Экземплярский в 1912 году был вынужден покинуть кафедру в Киевской духовной академии.